

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

In the present Office action, claims 1-15 were examined. Claims 1-6 and 8-15 were rejected. Claim 7 was objected to. By this amendment, claims 1 and 6 have been amended. Claims 5 and 7 have been cancelled. As a result of these amendments, claims 1-4, 6, and 8-15 are believed to be in condition for allowance.

Claim Objections

The Examiner objected to claim 7 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but noted that it would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Claim 7 is dependent upon claim 5, which is in turn dependent upon independent claim 1. As a result of this amendment, the limitations of claim 7 and claim 5 have been added to claim 1. Therefore, claim 1 is in fact original claim 7 rewritten in independent form including all the limitations of base claim 1 and intervening claim 5. As a result, Applicants respectfully traverse the Examiner's grounds for objection. Claim 1 is therefore believed to be in condition for allowance.

As a result of the limitations of claims 5 and 7 having been added to currently pending and amended claim 1, claims 5 and 7 have been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer. As a result, claim 6, previously dependent upon claim 5, has been amended so that it now depends from claim 1.

Claim rejections under 35 U.S.C. 102

The Examiner rejected claims 1-6 and 14 as being anticipated by Kirschner (U.S. 5,145,132). For the reasons noted above, claim 1 is now in condition for allowance. All of

remaining claims 2-4, 6, and 8-15 depend upon claim 1. Therefore, the Examiner's grounds for rejection with respect to claims 1-6 and 14 are rendered moot.

Claim Rejections under 35 U.S.C. 103

Claim 9 was rejected as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,709,057 to Johnson, Jr. et al. in view of Japanese Patent No. JP406010450A to Hashiguchi. For the reasons noted above with respect to the rejections under 35 U.S.C. §102, the Examiner's rejection with respect to claim 9, as well as claim 13, are similarly rendered moot.

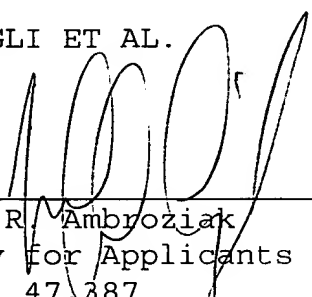
An earnest and thorough attempt has been made by the undersigned to resolve the outstanding issues in this case and place same in condition for allowance. If the Examiner has any questions or feels that a telephone or personal interview would be helpful in resolving any outstanding issues which remain in this application after consideration of this amendment, the Examiner is courteously invited to telephone the undersigned and the same would be gratefully appreciated.

It is submitted that the claims as amended herein patentably define over the art relied on by the Examiner and early allowance of same is courteously solicited.

If fees are required in connection with this case, it is respectfully requested that they be charged to Deposit Account No. 02-0184.

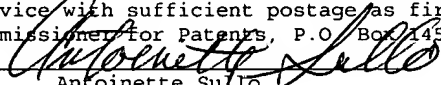
Respectfully submitted,

RETO HUGLI ET AL.

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I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service with sufficient postage as first class mail in an envelope addressed to: "Mail Stop AF, Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313" on February 24, 2004


Antoinette Sullio